

PEOPLE & THINGS

THERE is at any rate one man for whom the Berlin conference was an unqualified triumph; and that is Mr. Con O'Neill, the recently appointed Head of the Foreign Office News Department.

Mr. O'Neill's nightly "briefing conferences" were, by common consent, invaluable to the several hundred journalists whose task it was to despatch an authoritative account of the four Ministers' afternoon discussions. At first, I hear, they tended to wander from one spokesman to another like buffaloes in search of a water-hole; but after a few days Mr. O'Neill's pre-eminence in his difficult sphere became clear, and journalists of all nationalities crowded to hear him.

Mr. O'Neill does not look at all like the popular idea of a Foreign Service official. His lofty brow, blanching ascetic features and quasi-professorial utterance are, indeed, suggestive rather of the physicist's laboratory or the philosopher's cell. His audiences were, none the less, held captive not only by his consummate intellectual grasp of the matter in hand but by a rare understanding of their professional problems. His scholarly appearance conceals, moreover, a passionate sense of right and wrong.

His return to Berlin had, in fact, a particular significance for him in that it was while serving in the Embassy in Berlin that he resigned from the Foreign Office, at the end of 1938, on account of his disagreements with the Government's policy at Munich. It was not until nine years later that he formally rejoined the Foreign Service.

Mumm's the Word

THE Foreign Ministers' Conference has left Berlin not only with a new joke (the use of the phrase "Wir grüssen unsere Vierer" in parody of the Nazis' "Wir grüssen unseren Führer") but with the memory of the remarkable range of People's Democratic Drinks which were dispensed at the East Berlin Press Centre.

Many of these, though undeniably popular, could hardly be called democratic. Imperial Tokay, for instance, has none of the classless ring of vodka, silvovitz, and schnapps. But the prime curiosity was unquestionably the Chinese champagne. Even the most puritanical, I hear, could not resist the combination of the familiar, sloping-shouldered bottle, and the hieroglyphic label. All are said to have survived.

Treasure in W.C.1

THE University of London will shortly be the richer by Sir Louis Sterling's gift of his valuable library of first and early editions of the English poets and novelists from the fifteenth century onwards. Sir Louis has collected books ever since, as a poor immigrant from the United States, he came to seek his fortune in this country fifty years ago. His generous gift is intended to express his gratitude for what London has given to him—a great fortune, a host of friends, and forty years of pleasure at every first night, and at after-theatre suppers at the Savoy.

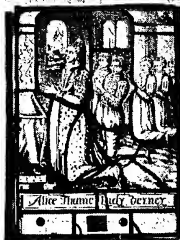
It is a matter of surprise that strong opposition was raised in the Court of University to the acceptance of Sir Louis's gift, on the ground that such treasures would be out of place in the

By ATTICUS

studious life of the University. In American universities such opposition would be inconceivable. There the Rare Book Department is regarded not only as a matter of pride but an important source of first-hand experience for scholars of all kinds.

A Welcome Return

WORKS of art so rarely return to roost that I was especially glad to hear of the recent purchase by the Warwickshire County Council of one of the panels of sixteenth-century glass from Compton Verney chapel. There was general regret among stained-glass enthusiasts when these panels were sold by Lord Manton in 1931; and the panel which has now been recovered is not only a work of



The recovered panel: Lady Verney with her children.

art but a contribution to Warwickshire social history, in that it commemorates the alliance of Sir Thomas Verney of Compton Verney with Alice Tame, whose forbears rebuilt the church of Fairford and enriched it with a wealth of fine glass.

There is therefore a particular aptness in the acquisition of this isolated panel for the Warwick Museum.

A Rare Animal

EVER since I read, in Tuesday's Hansard, of Lord Crook's learned allusion to a "newspaper mare's nest," I have been hoping that one of my country correspondents would come forward with a first-hand account of this rare creature. What is a newspaper mare. I wonder, and where does she normally nest? No answer, as yet, is forthcoming; but I seem to glimpse another side of her domestic arrangements in an advertisement in the farewell number of "Signature," for large quantities of "animal tub-sized paper."

Doubtless it is with this that the modish newspaper mare lines her bathroom; but of the nest itself I have no news.

Colophon

THERE are now two accepted formulas for a literary magazine—the police-review of thought and life in American-occupied countries, and the gentlemanly survey of middle-ageing competence. Mr. Oliver Simon's "Signature," of which the last number is now on sale, fitted into neither of these categories. Ostensibly devoted only to "typography and

the graphic arts," it foraged far and discerningly.

No subject was barred, contributors were rewarded with a case of wine, and, as Mr. Edmund Blunden remarks in his victory poem, "Writing, and bidding write, what will endure" were Mr. Simon's great preoccupations. In his last number he prints enlightened salutes to two great magazines of the immediate past—the "Revue Blanche" and "Der Sturm." The one drew upon the services of Strindberg, Debussy, Léon Blum, Bonnard and Vuillard; the other upon Chagall, Kandinsky and Kokoschka.

Would such names be welcome, I wonder, in our age of circumspection? Or would chaste lips be pursed, and righteous eyes turned to a framed copy of the McCarran Act?

Honour to History

HISTORIANS are often thought to be unpractical people; but I am glad to see that in Southampton, at least, there is no support for this fallacy. In admitting Dr. Arthur Bryant to honorary membership, the Southampton Chamber of Commerce may, in fact, be said to have formally refuted it.

I hear that last Tuesday's luncheon in Dr. Bryant's honour was attended not only by many civic dignitaries, but by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cunningham of Hyndhope and several other distinguished representatives of the Royal Navy. By a happy coincidence, it was the anniversary of the birthday of that great Secretary of the Admiralty, Samuel Pepys, to whom Dr. Bryant has devoted several years of his super-industrious existence.

Shorn of the beard which gave him so incongruous a resemblance to Lenin, Dr. Bryant displayed on Tuesday, as on many other occasions, a power of felicitous utterance which would take him far, if he so chose, in public life.

Japaned

THOSE who, like myself, take an unselfish and vicarious pleasure in reading about other people's meals may be interested in some news which has just reached me from the Imperial kitchens in Tokyo.

The Imperial chef, sixty-four-year-old Tokuzo Akiyama, was trained in Europe and would be able, if so commanded, to vie with the master-craftsmen of Saulieu and Valence. The Emperor, however, is so conditioned to the traditional lay-out of the Palace that he regards hot food as an anomaly. Persimmons and boiled water are served, therefore, in preference to the virtuous puddings of Laperouse. The Emperor is indifferent, too, to the charm of the chrysanthemum-crested cigarettes which he provides for his guests.

I grieve to learn of the break with tradition by which the Emperor's food is no longer tasted by a Court official as a precaution against poisoners; this duty is now deputed, it seems, to a salaried physician, whose prime function is arithmetical: he is there, in other words, to tot up the calories.

As She is Spoke

EVEN the experienced visitor to Paris is sometimes floored by French conversation.

Last week-end, for instance, an acquaintance of mine heard his hostess remark, of a mutual friend, that "il était autrefois dans les bois malicieux." Himself ignorant of the soft-wood trade, he felt bound to ask his English neighbour for a translation. "Well," she replied, "I think it must mean that he could always be got at in the woods."